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ACTION
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YEAR 1 LATER
UP, UP, AND AWAY! PART 6
TERRY DODSON RACHEL
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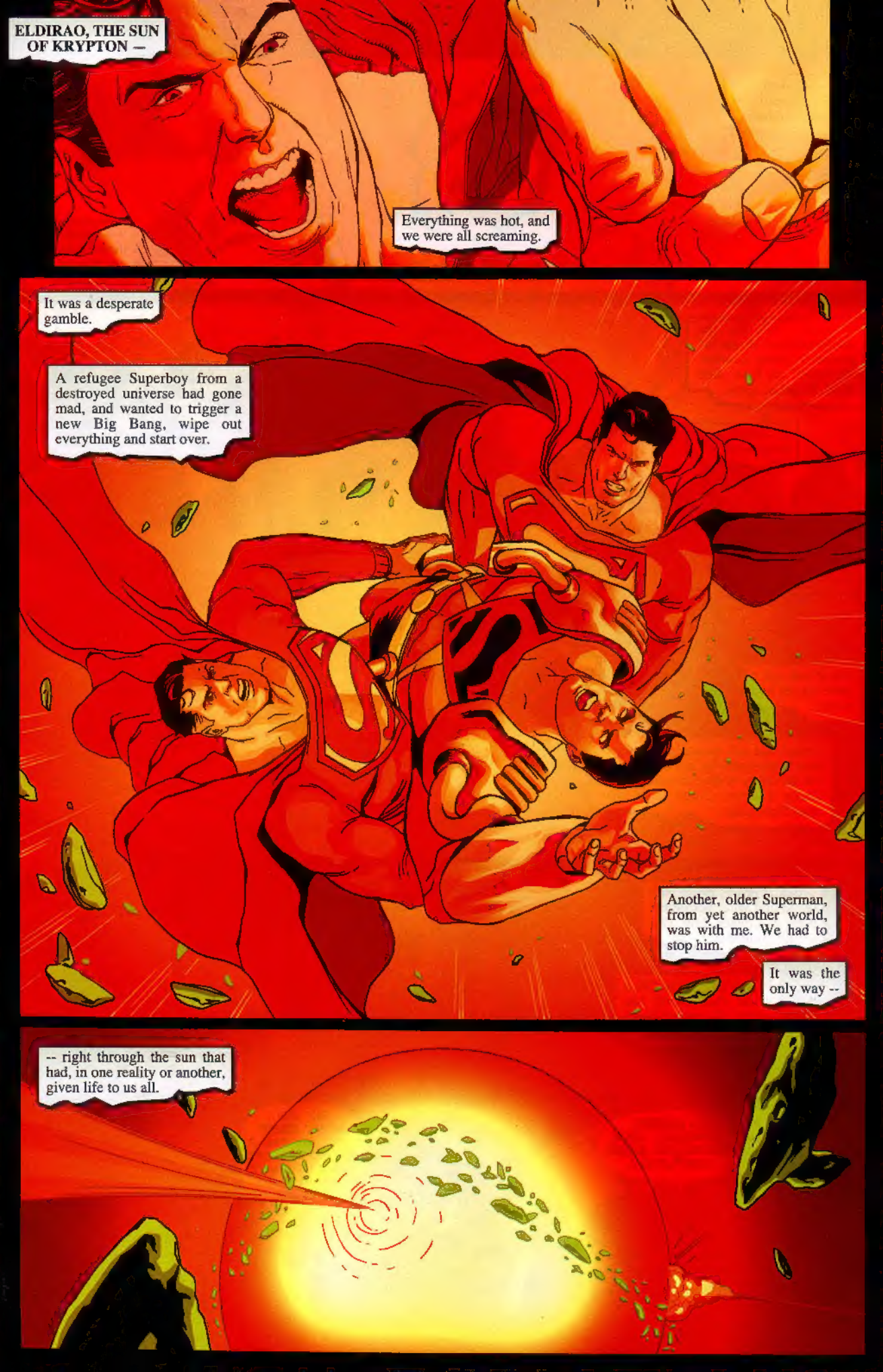

ELDIRAO, THE SUN OF KRYPTON —
Everything was hot, and we were all screaming.
It was a desperate gamble.
A refugee Superboy from a destroyed universe had gone mad, and wanted to trigger a new Big Bang, wipe out everything and start over.
Another, older Superman, from yet another world, was with me. We had to stop him.
It was the only way --
-- right through the sun that had, in one reality or another, given life to us all.

It worked. It stripped him of his powers.
It stripped all three of us of our powers --
-- and if not for the intervention of Mogo, the planetary Green Lantern, we would all have died there, in airless space.
It would have been worth it.
But it was not a price we all had to pay.
Today, that sad, twisted Superboy is kept imprisoned for his crimes, and for the safety of the universe, by the Green Lantern Corps. And that other Superman --
-- he's at peace, along with his loving wife, beside the body of Conner Kent. Our world's Superboy.
It was the last act in a crisis that shook the world. So many dead. So many lost forever.
And when I got the news --
I'M SORRY, SUPERMAN. YOUR POWERS ARE GONE. COMPLETELY.
BUT WE WON'T REST UNTIL WE FIND A WAY TO RESTORE THEM. YOU HAVE MY WORD ON THAT.
OF COURSE. WON'T REST...

When I got the news, I nodded, and agreed with them.
Whatever it took. Whatever had to be done. I'd do it.
But all I wanted --
All I wanted was Metropolis.
SUBWAY
The sounds, the smells, the busy streets, the concrete and glass spires, reaching for the sky. The people.
All I wanted was to be home. To find my wife --
CLARK! OH MY LORD, CLARK!
-- and to rest.

But that was then.
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE CHANCE.
STAND DOWN AND SURRENDER. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET HURT.
OUTLOOK PARK, METROPOLIS —

FORGET IT, SUPER-TRUNKS!
THE MONEY INTERGANG'S OFFERING FOR YOUR SCALP --
WELL, LET'S JUST SAY, MY MAMA DIDN'T RAISE NO FOOLS!
JUST THE ONE, RIOT. JUST THE ONE.
.338 FEDERALS HURT YOU SOME BEFORE, SUPERMAN. SO .50-CAL RAUFOSS ARMOR-PIERCERS OUGHT TO PUNCH YOUR HEART CLEAN OUT!
Bloodsport can pull almost any weapon out of his extradimensional arsenal. But with my powers back --
HOTCHA!
MY TURN!
And then there's Riot.
I can't hit him without it splitting off even more duplicates, but I can see at least four ways to immobilize him, when --
HNN..
My mind. My mind --

All of a sudden --
kk
All of a sudden, my mind is flooded --
Memories, sensations, data, sensory input -- coming almost faster than I can handle it --
Without even thinking about it, I know the ballistics of every bullet Bloodshot's fired, now and before.
The vector and mass of each of Riot's bodies --
And memories -- my first glimpse of Lois's smile, what flavor malted Pete had our first day of Pop Warner football --
And more -- more --
HUH.
THOUGHT YOUR POWER HAD KICKED UP A RUNG, SUPES --
-- BUT SOMETHING'S WRONG, AIN'T IT?
FINE, FINE! SOMETHING WRONG, BIG OPPORTUNITY! BUT, SPORTO --
SKREEEEEEE
-- SHOOT HIM! HIM! NOT ME!

And Silver Banshee's back, and I should have been braced for her --
-- but I was hearing some nasty turbulence over Akron --
IS HE -- OKAY?
I --
I DON'T --
AW, MAN. C'MON, BIG GUY, YOU JUST GOT BACK! GET --
BLUE!
≥KHHHK≤ DRENCHED -- CAN'T --
K-KILL YOU! ≥KZHH≤ DRY OFF, HUMILIATE YOU -- ≥KHHH≤ KILL YOU -- !
Livewire.
She's still soaked from the dunking in the falls. Not fully cohered -- still shorting out, not entirely solid.
And just like that, I see it all. I concentrate, focus only on the here and now --
BLOODSPORT!
He flinches, fires one last fusillade --
-- then goes for another weapon, an energy-rifle.

Perfect.
TOC
A wrist-snap -- just enough force to knock him cold. He falls, at just the right angle.
His muscles convulse.
His finger tightens on the trigger.
Aaaand --
BLOODSPORT! LOOK OU --
FOOK
AGHK!
Slams her right through Livewire. The electric shock knocks Banshee out, and she lets off enough of a magical jolt to put Livewire down.
And that just leaves Riot.
A quick vortex, subjecting him to a few seconds of near-vacuum, sucking the air from his lungs --

Done.
I hear the Special Crimes Unit vans approaching. They're two blocks away.
A quick glance shows they have degaussing cuffs that'll keep Livewire in line, anesthetic breathing gear for Silver Banshee --
-- even the neural disruptor net that'll collapse Riot back down to a single form and keep him there.
YEAH!
WELCOME BACK, PAL!
HOW 'BOUT A SMILE FOR --
SU-PER-MAN!
ALL RIGHT! SUPERMAN!
WHOO!
And the people around me --
The people around me --
PAL...?

THE DAILY PLANET —
I COULD HEAR THEIR PULSES, ALL OF THEM. COULD HAVE COUNTED THEM SIMULTANEOUSLY. AN OLD MAN STUMBLED AND CAUGHT HIMSELF.
I COULD TELL BY THE MOVEMENT OF THE AIR AND THE SCUFF OF HIS SHOE.
MY MIND ALWAYS WORKED QUICKLY BEFORE, BUT NOW — IT'S FASTER, MORE PRECISE. MY MEMORY'S... ASTONISHING, EVEN TO ME.
IT'S A LITTLE TOO SOON TO TELL, BUT I THINK THE SHOCK OF MY RETURNING POWERS BOOSTED MY BRAIN FUNCTIONS SOMEHOW.
WELL, THAT'S -- THAT'S GOOD, ISN'T IT?
YES. I'M SURE IT IS.
I'M SURE IT IS. IT'S JUST --
PEOPLE!
GATHER 'ROUND, GATHER 'ROUND!
WE'VE GOT A STORY, PEOPLE. A HUGE STORY, RIGHT IN OUR FRONT YARD. SUPERMAN'S BACK. AND THE WORLD'S GOING TO WANT TO KNOW HOW AND WHERE AND WHY, AND MORE --
— AND WE'RE GOING TO TELL THEM.
I WANT EYEWITNESS COVERAGE, CONNIE.
I WANT REACTIONS FROM THE MAYOR, THE GOVERNOR, THE PRESIDENT, THE PENTAGON. SCHUMAN, YOU AND BRATTON SPLIT THOSE UP.
I WANT TO KNOW ANYTHING WE DON'T KNOW THAT WE SHOULD. LANE, TALK TO THE J.S.A., ANY FORMER JUSTICE LEAGUERS YOU CAN FIND.
GOOD PHOTOS, OLSEN, BUT I WANT MORE.
AND WE NEED TO TALK TO THE S.C.U., FIND OUT WHAT —

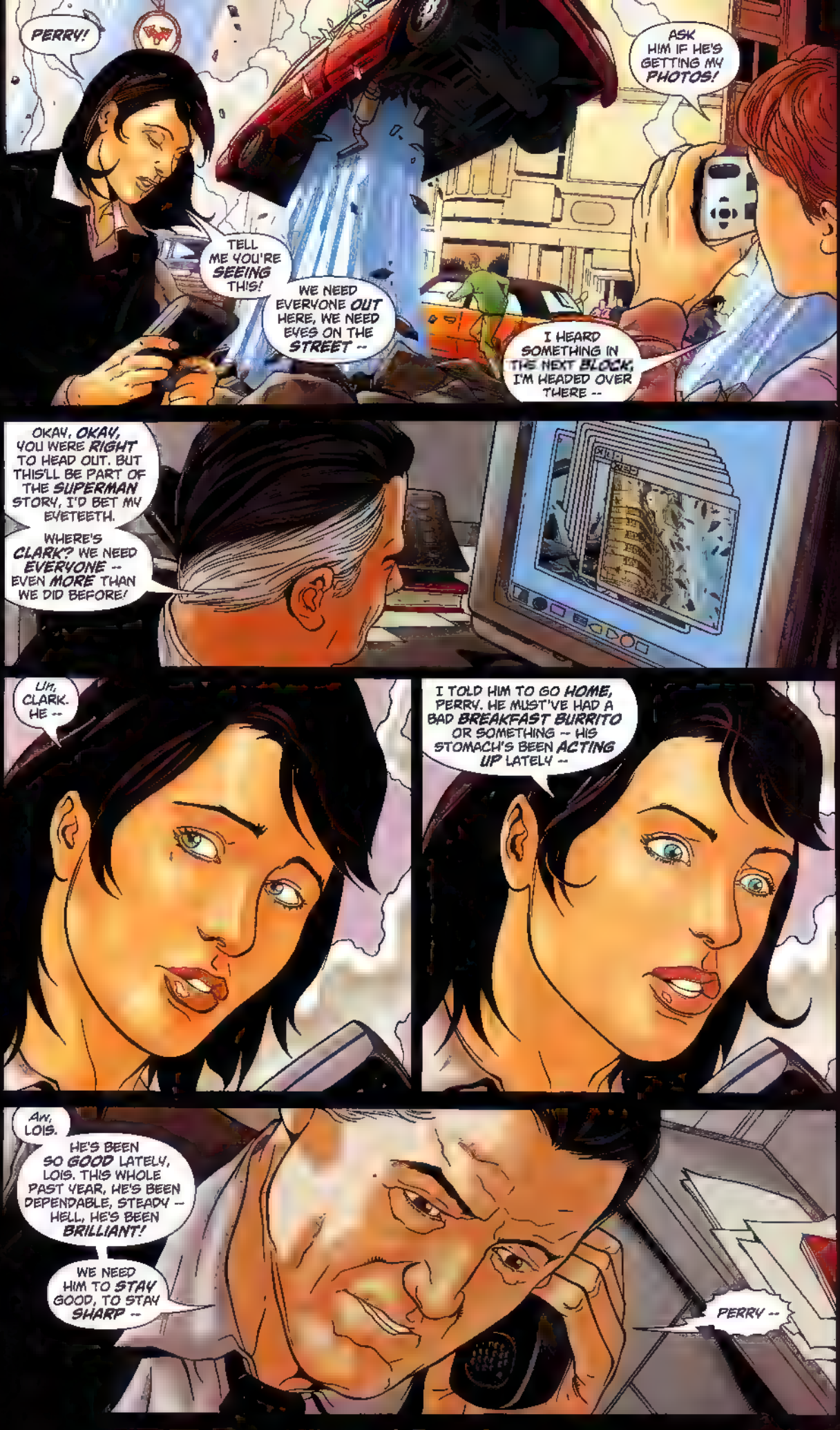
The S.C.U. They have everyone in custody
Even Hellgrammite -- they're transporting him to Stryker's Island. I know how many knots the boat is making.
The captain's voice -- I took a class with him at UMet, sophomore year World Lit 303. I hear radio squawks in New York --
-- see a man selling Popsicles in Vero Beach --
KENT!
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
S-SORRY, PERRY, I --
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU LOOK A LITTLE FOGGY --
I DON'T -- FEEL SO GOOD --
I THINK -- THINK I NEED SOME --
KENT?!
EXIT
CLARK?
KENT! WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BREAKING STORY, HERE! SUCK IT UP AND --
XIT
KENT?

Too many voices.
Too many heartbeats, too much blood rushing through too many veins. Too many radio signals, wi-fi zones, footsteps on asphalt.
I'm not used to it again, not yet. I block it out for a moment. Focus my thoughts.

And I let it in again. Slowly. Controlling it. The taxis honking, the cell phone signals lancing through the air, the cloth rustling as the people below rush from place to place
They're so small, down there. Like ants
A year ago I lost my powers. They took until now to come back.
CHANEL'S
Did I suppress them? Keep them from returning, so I could live as an ordinary man? I might have. I may never know
I hope not.
On this world, under this sun, I have astounding powers. A gift, conferred on me by cataclysm and destiny
And all they cost me -- all they cost me -- is the ability ever truly to be one of those people below
I can sense pressure on my skin, to the tiniest fraction of an ounce. But I don't feel another's touch the way other men do
I am different. I always will be. I am among them, but not one of them.
But then, so many men live with worse, and never breathe a hint of complaint. And they don't have the opportunity to save countless lives

I head back down
-- and I hope Lois got the message I scribbled for her on my way out of the newsroom
LOIS, THIS IS CRAZY.
YOU'VE GOT, LIKE, SUPER-HEROES TO CALL. WHY'D YOU INSIST WE COME OUT HERE?
CALL IT A HUNCH, JIMMY. BUT --
HM?
JIMMY! BE READY! WHATEVER IT IS
RRRR

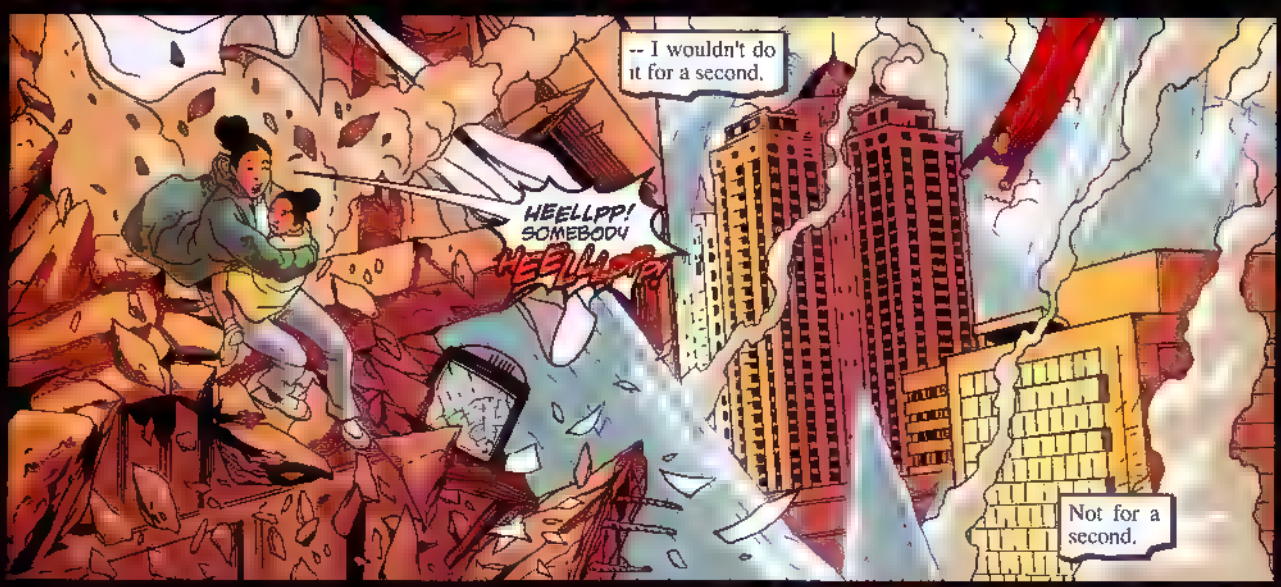
I heard something Faint, deep in the earth But I couldn't pinpoint it, couldn't make sense of it
Now its spread Under the whole Central Business District
And its growing, breaking through --
¡DIOS MI --
AAAAAA
Crystal Kryptonian crystal, like the shard that was in the ship that brought me here so long ago
This isn't Intergang This is something else Something more
SAGRADA MARÍA, MADRE DE DIOS, NO PUEDO RESPIRAR, MI CORAZÓN, ESTÁ PALPITANDO TAN -- YO PENSABA QUE IBA A --
-- OH, THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
DEAR GOD. SUPERMAN, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING --
YOU'RE SAFE NOW, MISS. JUST STAY OUT IN THE OPEN, OUT FROM UNDER ANYTHING HEAVY.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME --
"-- I HAVE THINGS TO DO!"
AAA--


PERRY!
TELL ME YOU'RE SEEING THIS!
WE NEED EVERYONE OUT HERE, WE NEED EYES ON THE STREET --
ASK HIM IF HE'S GETTING MY PHOTOS!
I HEARD SOMETHING IN THE NEXT BLOCK; I'M HEADED OVER THERE --
OKAY, OKAY, YOU WERE RIGHT TO HEAD OUT. BUT THIS'LL BE PART OF THE SUPERMAN STORY, I'D BET MY EYETEETH.
WHERE'S CLARK? WE NEED EVERYONE -- EVEN MORE THAN WE DID BEFORE!
UH, CLARK. HE --
I TOLD HIM TO GO HOME, PERRY. HE MUST'VE HAD A BAD BREAKFAST BURRITO OR SOMETHING -- HIS STOMACH'S BEEN ACTING UP LATELY --
AW, LOIS.
HE'S BEEN SO GOOD LATELY, LOIS. THIS WHOLE PAST YEAR, HE'S BEEN DEPENDABLE, STEADY -- HELL, HE'S BEEN BRILLIANT!
WE NEED HIM TO STAY GOOD, TO STAY SHARP --
PERRY --

I hear what Lois says, and I hear Perry's reaction. And I can hear her hating to do it, with every syllable she utters
But it has to be done
For me to be Superman, unexplained absences have to be part of Clark Kent's life, without anyone thinking more than, "Well, that's Clark for you."

I don't like it any more than Lois does --
but it has to be done

This is what I am. This is *who* I am.
If there's a price to pay, so be it. Even if I could give it up, renounce my power and be fully human.


-- I wouldn't do it for a second.
HEELLPP! SOMEBODY
HEELLPP!
Not for a second.

WHAT'S GOING ON, BOSS? WHAT IS ALL THAT STUFF?
IT'S THE KRYPTONIAN ARTIFACT, TOYMAN.
IT'S WHAT WE WORKED SO HARD TO BRING UP FROM THE EARTH'S CORE.
BUT -- IT WAS A SHIP! IT WAS JUST ONE THING, NOT --
-- NOT ALL THIS -- STUFF!
THAT WAS ITS INERT FORM.
LIKE THE FRAGMENT WE USED TO CALL TO IT, IT'S MADE OF SUNSTONE. AND SUNSTONE IS SELF-REPLICATING, AND INFINITELY PROGRAMMABLE.
INERT, THE ARTIFACT WAS RELATIVELY SMALL. AWAKEN IT, THOUGH --
KSCHHHHHH
AHH!
AWAKEN IT --
-- AND IT CAN BE SO MUCH MORE --!

-- MY RIDE IS HERE.
BROADCASTING OVERRIDE CODE. DISABLE VOICE RECOGNITION.
YOU WILL RECOGNIZE LEX LUTHOR AS YOUR AUTHORIZED COMMANDER.
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME --
PERFECT. NOW THE CITIZENS OF METROPOLIS WILL RECEIVE WHAT THEY SO RICHLY DESERVE.
BUT... WAIT.
WHAT ABOUT ME?
WE'RE DONE, TOYMAN. YOU'VE LIVED UP TO YOUR SIDE OF OUR BARGAIN --
-- AND PAYMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN ARRANGED. SEND AN E-MAIL TO THE CONTACT NAME I GAVE YOU --
-- AND YOUR CREATOR, WINSLOW SCHOTT, WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE ADDRESS OF YOUR CHOICE, TO DEAL WITH AS YOU SEE FIT.
IF I WERE YOU, THOUGH, I WOULDN'T HANG AROUND METROPOLIS.

"IT'S NOT GOING TO LAST MUCH LONGER."
KRR CH
SU-SUPERMAN!
MOVE OUT QUICKLY, PEOPLE, BUT DON'T PANIC. I'VE MADE A PATH THROUGH THE CRYSTAL.
This is the last of them. They've been trapped between the crystal pillars and what's left of the First Metropolitan Bank
IT'S CRAZY -- ALL THIS, IT'S SHEER MADNESS!
WHEN WILL IT END, SUPERMAN?
I listen to the deep harmonics in the crystal
They've changed, steadied But there was something else to it now. Something above us.
IT'S ALL RIGHT -- IT'S ALMOST OVER.
THERE WON'T BE ANY MORE DAMAGE, ANY MORE OF THOSE PILLARS COMING UP THROUGH THE GROUND. YOU HAVE MY WORD ON THAT.
I don't tell them all of it, though The crystals are done erupting, yes But now, they're feeding raw material upward, building something above
Something massive

JUST GO, GET OUT FROM UNDER.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
And with a shimmering, almost delicate chime, the mass of crystal above us shivers, cracks --
-- and something rises free from its crystal supports. Something that takes to the air.
The bystanders flee to safety --
And I feel something. The ache I get in my back teeth whenever Kryptonite's around.
It's very slight. But I understand, at last, what was behind the Kryptonite thefts, behind breaking the Kryptonite Man out of jail.
It was all for this, whatever this is. And the calculation, the obsessive determination behind it --
One man.
Only one man.
ALL RIGHT, LUTHOR --

UP, UP AND AWAY! CHAPTER SIX

THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB...

GEOFF JOHNS & KURT BUSIEK -Writers
RENATO GUEDES -Art & Colors
ROB LEIGH-Letters
TERRY & RACHEL DODSON-Cover Artists • ALEX SINCLAIR-Cover Colorist
NACHIE CASTRO-Associate Editor • MATT IDELSON-Editor
SUPERMAN created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER

S2THECOMIC.COM
Far special news, downloads, surprises!

June is just a day away and I have to admit it's getting harder and harder to stay indoors and work on the comics you love. Luckily we've got such a dedicated staff here at DC that they are willing to come to the office and work through the hottest of days, without air conditioning or water, and for endless hours (not really-overtime issues), to make you the comics you love. But that's not to say we can't have **some** fun on our little time off.

I'm happy to announce that *DC Nation* has its own dodgeball team, of the same name, that's going into its second year. And let me tell you, it's great seeing people like Editorial's Jeanine Schaefer and Marketing's Dan DiGiacomo throw things at other teams instead of each other. More important, since you are all charter members of the *DC Nation*, this is **your** team too. Every week they take on such fierce opponents as Beers and Tears, Old Men Off and the Crack Ferrets. Trust me, they are going to need all the support you can give them.

As team sponsor, I take my honorary coach responsibilities seriously, and I've been learning everything I can about the sport. Next week, I'm planning to attend practice and I'm bringing a bag of wrenches.

DC's very own softball team, the DC Bullets, is also back in action. Under the steady hand of skipper Joel Press (Manager, Legal Affairs), we are ready for the new season and a schedule that culminates with our annual confrontation with our crosstown comic publishing rivals (nobody you've heard of). Joel has once again put together a balanced team, with youthful talent like Advertising's Adam (*"I'll play every sport you got"*) Schlagman balanced against seasoned veterans like Deputy Legal Counsel Jay (*"I'll show these young guys a thing or two"*) Kogan. If you ever see Joel on one of the ball fields in Central Park, stop and ask him about the secrets of coaching and the joys of ordering your boss around.

Hey, one last thing – *DC Nation* made the trip to the Toronto Comicon, and we had a chance to meet a number of our fans there and prove that the DC Nation knows no borders. Next up, WizardWorld Philadelphia and then Heroes Con Charlotte. Hope to see you at one of them. Be sure to stop by to get your official DC Nation pin! It's a fashion accessory for everything you wear.

To be continued. dan didio

DC NATION

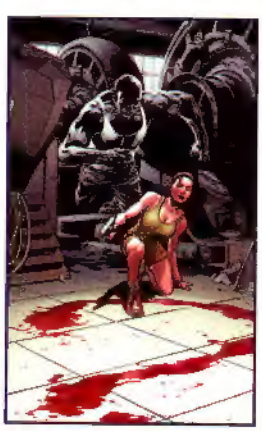
For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at dccomics.com

Next in...

SUPERMAN #653

The card: Superman vs. Lex Luthor! The purse: Metropolis! The place: SUPERMAN #653! Go, team!

THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK



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CRISIS AFTERMATH: THE SPECTRE #1

SUPERMAN/BATMAN #26

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